

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

MEDICAL CENTER
PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

COPY

DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS
School of Medicine

December 21, 1961

Dr. Detlev Bronk
President
National Academy of Sciences
2101 Constitution Avenue
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Dr. Bronk:

My colleagues, whose names are appended, and I met here under the chairmanship of Dr. William Steere on December 12, as the Long-Range Planning Council of the American Institute for Biological Sciences. We were charged by the governing of the Council to discuss some of the long-range problems of biology as a unified science. We are preparing a number of recommendations to the governing board of the AIBS indicating some measures that they might take towards maintaining the vigor of our science.

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Meanwhile, on our own initiative, we feel compelled to point out the trenchant role that the National Academy of Sciences should be playing in this kind of planning and in implementing widely felt needs. We feel, however, that the present organization of the biological sciences within the Academy along taxonomic lines can only frustrate the application of its resources and talents to contemporary problems; it sets a poor example to university faculties in establishing the academic organization of biological work; it discourages the election to the Academy of the most brilliant and productive scientists precisely because their work is of such fundamental character that it cuts across taxonomic divisions.

A number of proposals have been made in the past to reorganize biology within the Academy, and we are aware that this problem has had your continuing consideration. We wish now to stress its urgency if the Academy is to maintain a useful function of leadership in biology. The detailed form of such a reorganization should be left to the leadership of the Academy itself; its sections did correspond more or less precisely to the functional organization established by the National Science Foundation, it could at least insure a worthwhile concentration of effort in meeting contemporary needs.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

cc: Dr. Daymon Boynton Dr. C.L. Prosser
Dr. George L. Clarke Dr. O.H. Schmitt
Dr. LaMont C. Cole Dr. W.C. Steere
Dr. H.J. Muller Dr. K.V. Thimann